

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study was made possible through a Smithsonian Research Foundation Grant (SFG-O-1894) made available by the Bombay Natural History Society.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY-1,
January 25, 1973.

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7. CALCIUM INTAKE IN VULTURES OF THE GENUS *GYP*S

Vultures grouped under the genus *Gyps* were known to feed only on meat and other soft tissues of carcasses and not on bones, and therefore their mode of calcium intake, required to build up bones, had always been a mystery.

During one of my observations on vultures at Gir Forest I came across the following incident. In the western Gir, close to Sasan village, about ninety-five Whitebacked (*Gyps bengalensis*), seven Longbilled (*Gyps indicus*), four Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*), and three King (*Torgos calvus*) vultures were feeding off the skinned carcass of an ox on 23rd January 1972 at 1245 hrs. Soon a few vultures with bulging crops emerged from the squabbling flock, walked about twenty feet aside, and started picking up and swallowing pieces of old, dry bones including ribs of small animals and chopped up pieces of skull. It is a village carcass dumping site, adjacent to the forest.

To further check this up on captive birds I introduced old bone pieces into my vulture aviary. The vultures were not kept hungry. Soon after introducing bones, Longbilled, Whitebacked, and also the only Griffon I had came one by one and swallowed some bones, one of the birds dipping a piece into water before swallowing it. This observation on captive birds was also witnessed by Dr. Sálím Ali during his visit to the Gir two weeks later.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My study was sponsored by the Gir Project of Bombay Natural History Society with financial assistance through Yale University from Smithsonian Foreign Currency Programme Grant No. SFG-O-1894.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
BOMBAY,
January 1, 1973.

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8. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF GOLDENBACKED THREETOED WOODPECKER [*DINOPIUM SHORII* (VIGORS)] SOUTH OF THE HIMALAYAN RANGE

In the course of cataloguing the Society's collection, we came across a ♂ specimen of *Dinopium shorii* (Vigors) [wing 158 ; bill 34 ; tail 98] No. 10298 (collected by Major F. T. Williams) marked 'Kolatur North, S.I.R., 31st October 1897'. Kolatur North is on the South Indian Railway not far from Madras. This is so far out of the currently accepted range of the species that we decided that though Major Williams obtained a partridge at the same place on 6th February 1898, there was some error in the labelling and that it may have been obtained in Burma where Williams had collected birds in May and June 1897.

That the labelling was not incorrect is suggested by references we have come across later. Blyth (1849) in 'The Catalogue of Birds in the Collection of Asiatic Society', p. 56, refers to a specimen from Gumsur (Coll. Capt. McPherson) while earlier in 1845 in *Jour. Asiat. Soc.* 14 : 193, he said that this species inhabits 'the sub-Himalayan region as well as the hilly ranges of peninsular India'. Also we have Jerdon's (1862) statement in BIRDS OF INDIA (1 : 299) that he saw it on the slopes of the Nilgiris up to about 5000 ft. It may be noted that Blanford (1895) (FAUNA 3 : 63) referring to Blyth's record said : 'The reported occurrences in the Indian peninsula need confirmation ; they may have been founded on large specimens of *T. javanensis*'. Later, Stuart Baker (FAUNA 4 : 74) ignored the continental records but included Orissa in the range of *Dinopium javanense rubropygialis*. Whistler & Kinnear (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 37 : 294) said the last name could not refer to a bird from the southwest and called it *D. j. malabaricus*. They objected to Baker's inclusion of Orissa in its range, but though they also referred to Blyth's record, made no attempt at its identification.

The discovery of Major William's specimen prompts us to draw attention to the probability of the earlier records being correct, and to